

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (currently amended) A method for managing marketing comprising:

creating a plurality of contact relationship ~~categories~~ levels representative of a customer lifecycle, wherein each contact relationship level is assigned to at least one marketing phase;

assigning a relative interaction value that relates to progress in developing a relationship between a business and each contact of a plurality of contacts and a variable cost to each ~~contact relationship category~~ of a plurality of potential interactions between the business and each contact of the plurality of contacts;

~~determining a value of each actual contact relationship based on the assigned value of the contact relationship category corresponding to each actual contact relationship; and~~

recording each actual interaction between the business and each contact of the plurality of contacts in an ongoing interaction record, wherein each actual interaction the plurality of potential interactions having an associated relative interaction value and variable cost;

developing a data stream for each contact of the plurality of contacts, wherein the data stream tracks a cause and effect relationship between the recorded actual interactions, the corresponding relative interaction value of each recorded actual interaction, and the corresponding variable cost of each recorded actual interaction;

assigning each contact of the plurality of contacts to a contact relationship level of the plurality of contact relationship levels as each actual interaction is recorded; and

generating a ~~contact~~ summary report for each contact of the plurality of contacts, the summary report based on the ~~determined value of each actual contact relationship~~ data stream for each contact.

2. (canceled)

3. (currently amended) A method in accordance with Claim 1 further comprising modeling alternative strategies in advance of investment [[by]], wherein modeling alternative strategies comprises:

anticipating potential interactions, fixed costs associated with each potential interaction, and variable costs associated with each potential interaction, the potential interactions being necessary to carry out the alternative strategies;

running reports for each alternative strategy based on status quo, best case scenario, and worst case scenario;

selecting a best new planned strategy;

configuring a relationship tracking system to track an implementation of the selected best new planned strategy; and

tracking actual results in executing the selected best new planned strategy.

4.-27. (canceled)

28. (currently amended) A method in accordance with Claim 1 further comprising receiving contact information and storing the contact information to create a contact profile and cross-reference the contact profile against a unique identifier for easy retrieval and update, wherein the contact information includes the ongoing interaction record.

29. (canceled)

30. (canceled)

31. (previously presented) A method in accordance with Claim 1 further comprising generating reports that help management improve upon a marketing strategy to reduce risk and maximize profits.

32. (previously presented) A method in accordance with Claim 1 further comprising providing a detailed history of past interactions, current interactions, and planned interactions.

33. (new) A method in accordance with Claim 1, wherein the at least one marketing phase includes an acquisition phase, a closing phase, and a retention phase, and wherein assigning a relative interaction value that relates to progress in developing the relationship between a business and each contact of a plurality of contacts and a variable cost to each of a plurality of potential interactions between the business and each contact of the plurality of contacts comprises:

predefining which of the plurality of potential interactions enable movement of a contact of the plurality of contacts from a first contact relationship level of the plurality of contact relationship levels to a second relationship level of the plurality of relationship levels and from a first marketing phase to a second marketing phase.

34. (new) A method in accordance with Claim 1 further comprising pre-configuring a relationship tracking system with the plurality of potential interactions and the associated relative interaction value and variable cost for each potential interaction.

35. (new) A method in accordance with Claim 1, wherein recording each actual interaction between the business and each contact of the plurality of contacts comprises automatically recording each actual interaction in the ongoing interaction record in real time, wherein each actual interaction is initiated by at least one of the business, a contact of the plurality of contacts, and an automatic trigger based on one of a previous actual interaction and an integrated market action plan.

36. (new) A method in accordance with Claim 33, wherein assigning each contact of the plurality of contacts to a contact relationship level of the plurality of contact relationship levels as each actual interaction is recorded comprises assigning each contact to a contact relationship level based on which potential interactions of the plurality of potential interactions are determined to be necessary to move each contact from the first contact

relationship level of the plurality of contact relationship levels to the second relationship level of the plurality of contact relationship levels and which potential interactions are determined to be necessary to move each contact from the first marketing phase to the second marketing phase.

37. (new) A method in accordance with Claim 1 further comprising aggregating, as part of a data stream for a particular contact, each actual interaction between the business and the particular contact to determine an interaction flow between the business and the particular contact within each contact relationship level of the plurality of contact relationship levels and within the at least one marketing phase, wherein the data stream for the particular contact includes a relative interaction value of each actual interaction between the business and the particular contact and a variable cost of each actual interaction between the business and the particular contact.

38. (new) A method in accordance with Claim 37 further comprising aggregating the data stream associated with each contact of the plurality of contacts into the data stream of all contacts of the plurality of contacts to determine an interaction flow between the business and the plurality of contacts within each contact relationship level of the plurality of contact relationship levels and within the at least one marketing phase.

39. (new) A method in accordance with Claim 38 further comprising generating a summary report for the plurality of contacts, the summary report based on the aggregate data stream of the plurality of contacts.

40. (new) A method in accordance with Claim 39 further comprising:

comparing the data stream for each contact of the plurality of contacts and the summary report generated for each contact to the aggregate data stream of the plurality of contacts and the summary report generated for the plurality of contacts to facilitate guiding decisions and process improvements relating to relationship development between the business and each contact of the plurality of contacts in real time.

41. (new) A method in accordance with Claim 38 further comprising:

determining an aggregate relative interaction value for the plurality of contacts; and

correlating the aggregate relative interaction value with at least one of business profits, customer satisfaction, and other key performance indicators of the business, wherein the aggregate relative interaction value is a leading indicator of business profits, customer satisfaction, and other key performance indicators of the business.

42. (new) A method in accordance with Claim 38 further comprising:

using the aggregated data stream to facilitate iterative improvement of business performance; and

adjusting predetermined relative interaction values to reflect new values suggested from results obtained from a relationship tracking system.